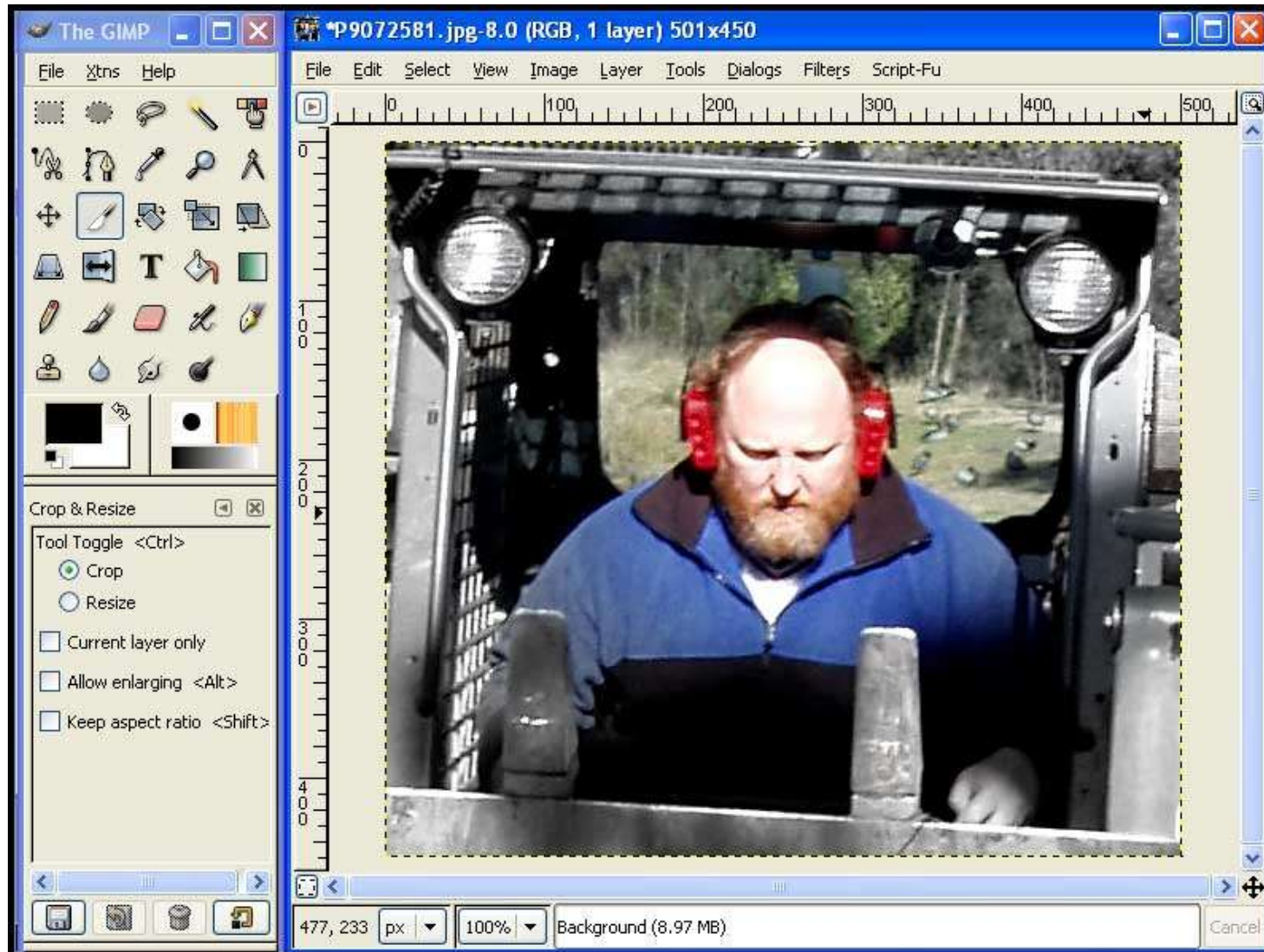# Screencasting – Talking pictures

Today we're going to create a talking picture. It's a very simple process and once you have it down, you can use it to move any body parts!

First we need to modify an image in your preferred image editor. My preferred image editor is the Graphic Image Manipulation Program or GIMP for short. I like GIMP because its free and open source, and it has heaps of features. Don't worry, what we're about to do here in GIMP is a very similar process in other programs like Photoshop.

First of all, open up an image by clicking none other than the old File>open. Then change its size to the size of a regular Flash stage (550 pixels wide).

Screencasting – Talking pictures
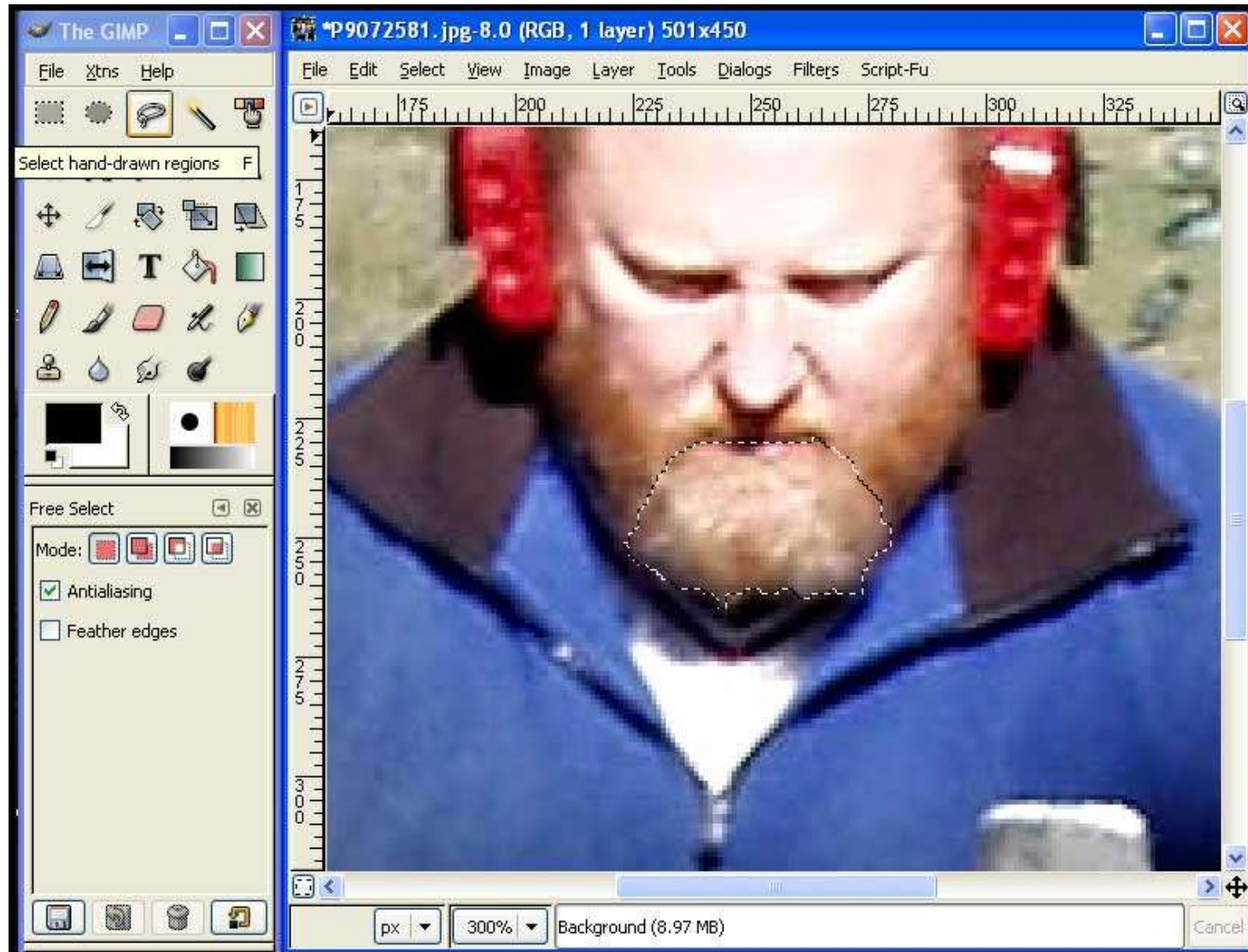
Alright, now we want to zoom in to our image and select the lower jaw area with the selection tool. I've used GIMP's free hand selection tool because I'm not too familiar with the others. They look similar to other auto selection tools, but seem to work a little differently. One of these days I'll read up GIMP's help and get it right, but today I'm just gunna stick with what I know.

So I've selected the lower jaw region. What I'm going to do is cut it out and paste it in a new file so that in the end I will have 2 images. One of my boss Colin, and one of his jaw ready for importing into an animation program.

Let's do it.

Screencasting – Talking pictures
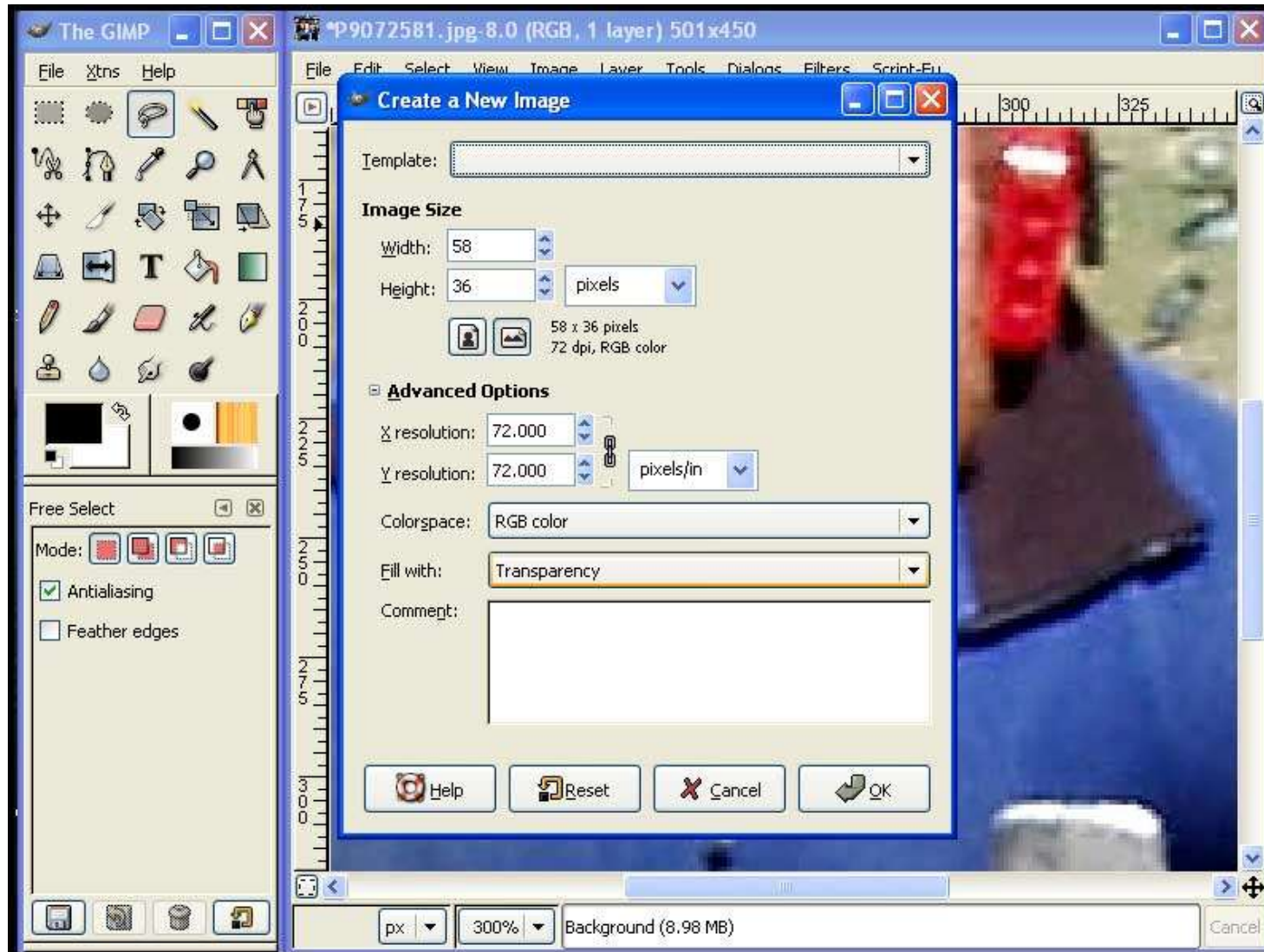
After selecting the lower jaw and cutting it out (Ctrl X or edit>cut) I now have the lower jaw sitting on what's known as the clipboard. All programs have a clipboard. Its a temporary storage place for things to cut, copy and paste to and from.

So, Colin's jaw is sitting in my clipboard, now I need to create a new file to paste it in (Ctrl N or File>New). GIMP sees that I have something on the clipboard so has automatically provided me with the right size for the jaw in the new file. All I have to do now is make sure that the file will be transparent. In the "fill with" field I have selected "Transparency".

All image editors have the transparency option when creating a new file.

BY: Leigh Blackall

Screencasting – Talking pictures
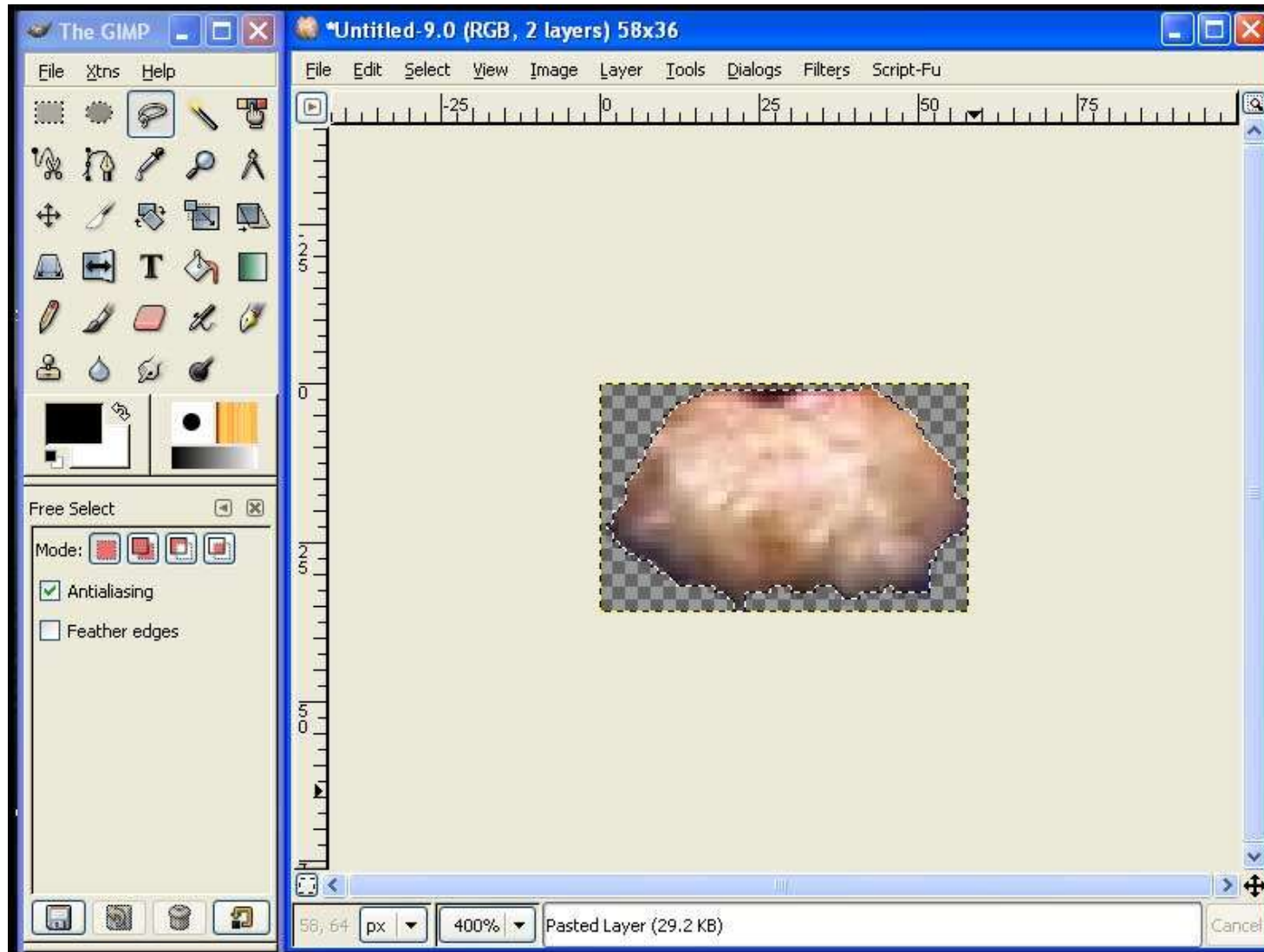
Now I simply paste the jaw from the clipboard. Notice the checkered background? This indicates that the file is transparent. We need the jaw to be transparent so it doesn't stand out too much in the animation. We want to jaw image to look like it is part of the original image. This'll make more sense later on.

Screencasting – Talking pictures
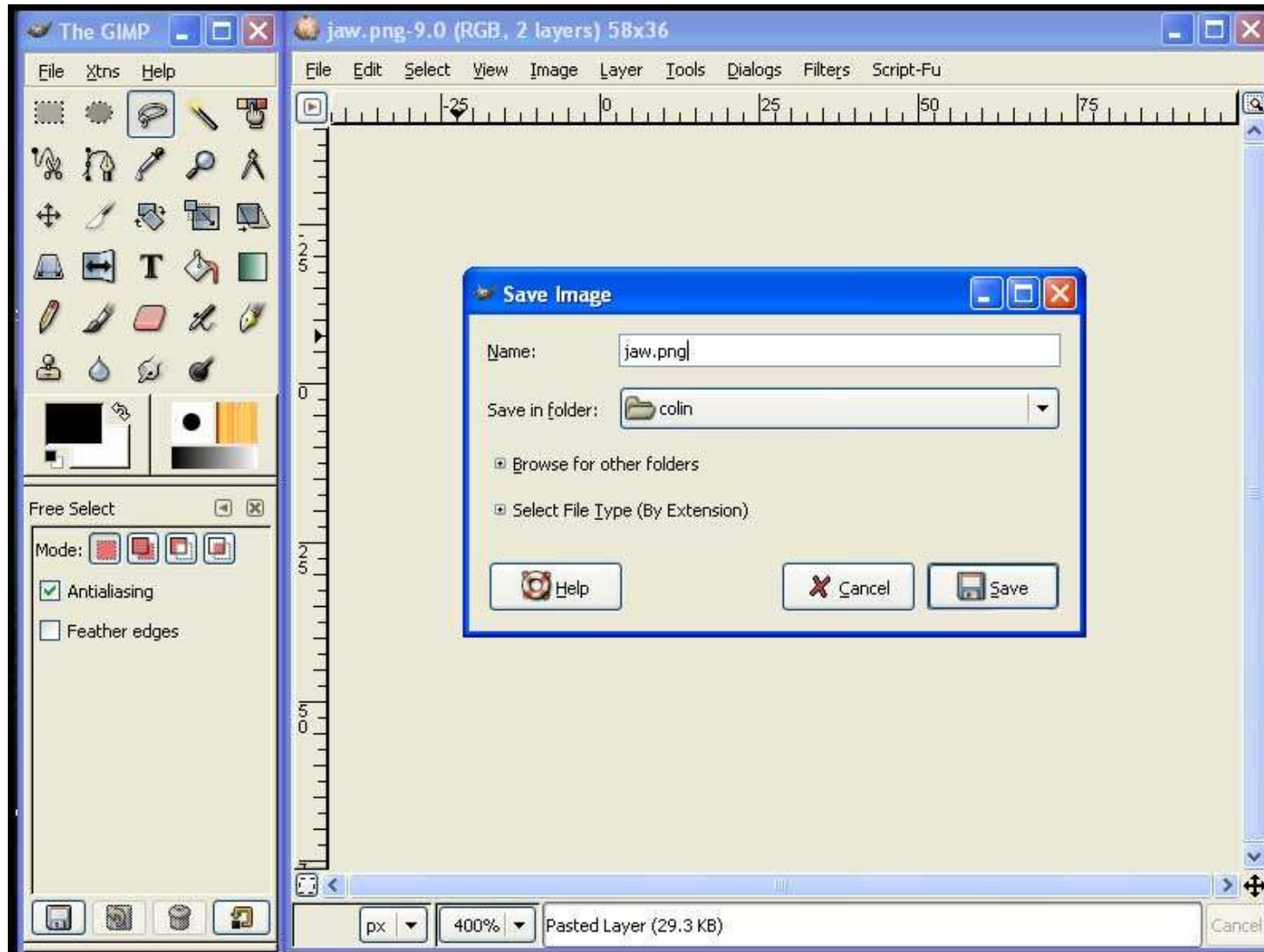
Happy with the jaw, I better save it. Transparent images need to be saved in a special format. The most common format is the Portable Network Graphic, or PNG. For more information on the PNG format take a look at wikipedia's entry:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PNG

In GIMP there are 2 ways to save in a particular format. One is to simply type the file extension in, for example "colin.png". But if you weren't sure of the file format's extension then simply click the drop down menu "Select File Type".

Notice how many file types are supported by GIMP. That's another thing I like about GIMP.

Now that I've saved the transparent jaw, I better save Colin's head!

Screencasting – Talking pictures
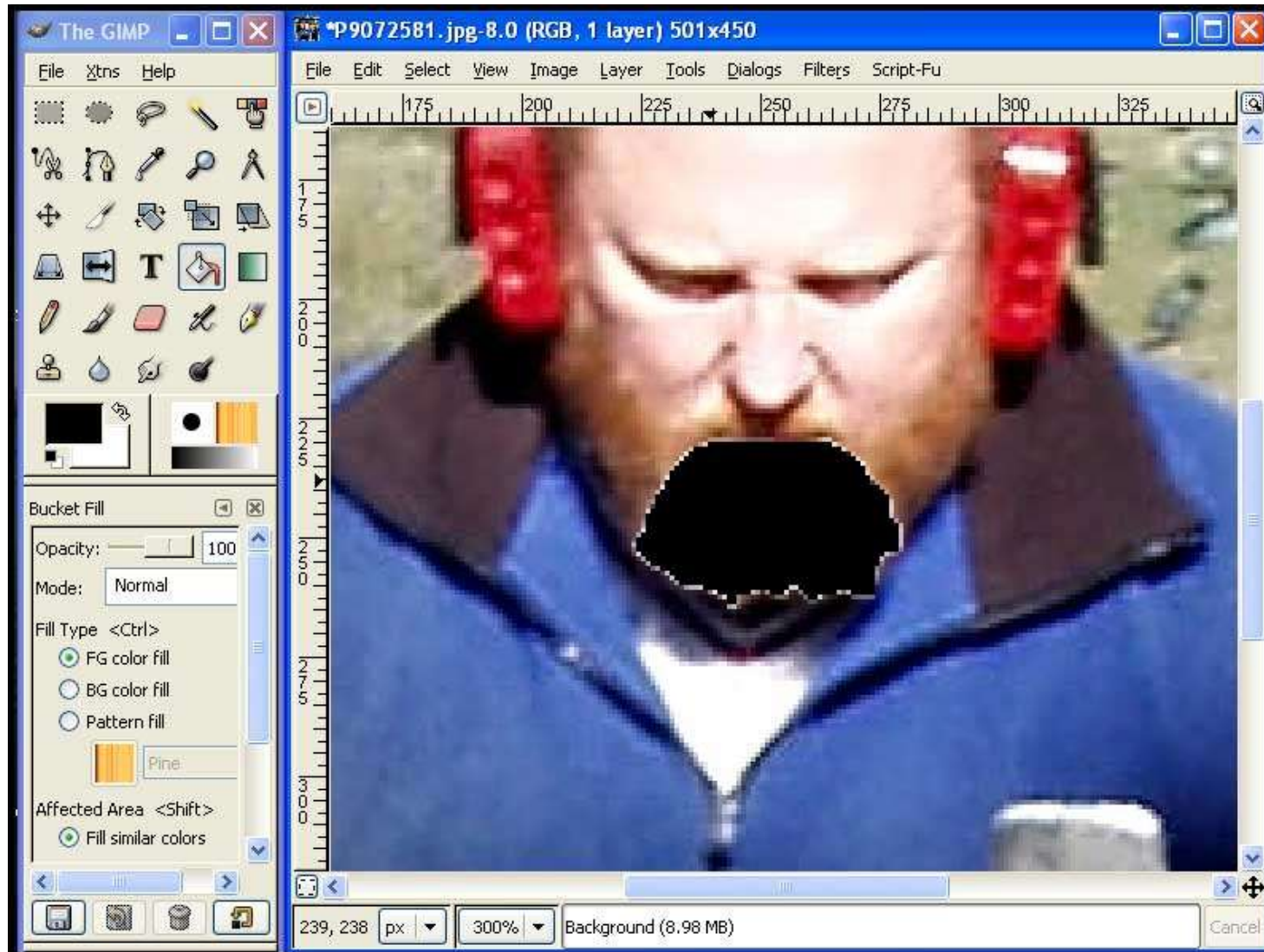
He's a mean looking dude hey! And I work for him!

When I cut Colin's jaw out it left a white space. Using the colour fill tool (selected) I just clicked in the white space to make it black. Making sure I had black selected as a colour of course.

Are you seeing where this is going? The transparent jaw will sit on top of this black space…

Screencasting – Talking pictures
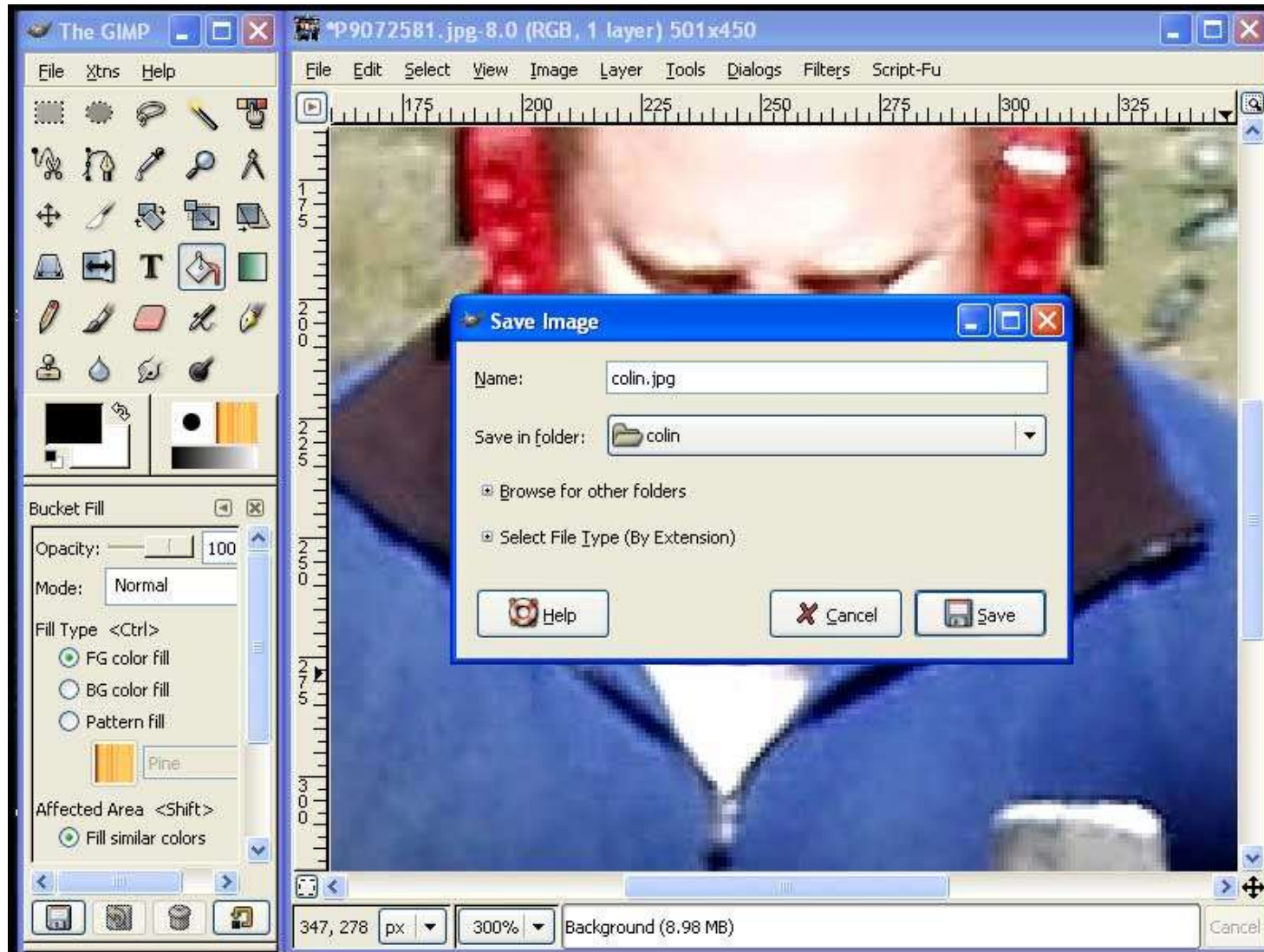
Now I'm just saving the picture of Colin in the Joint Photographic Experts Group format, or JPG for normal people. The JPG format is the most widely used image format, and is especially good for compressing images for the web. For more information of JPG, see the wikipedia entry:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/.JPG

As you already know about GIMP, I can save to this format by simply typing in the extension, or selecting it from a list in the File Type menu.

Screencasting – Talking pictures
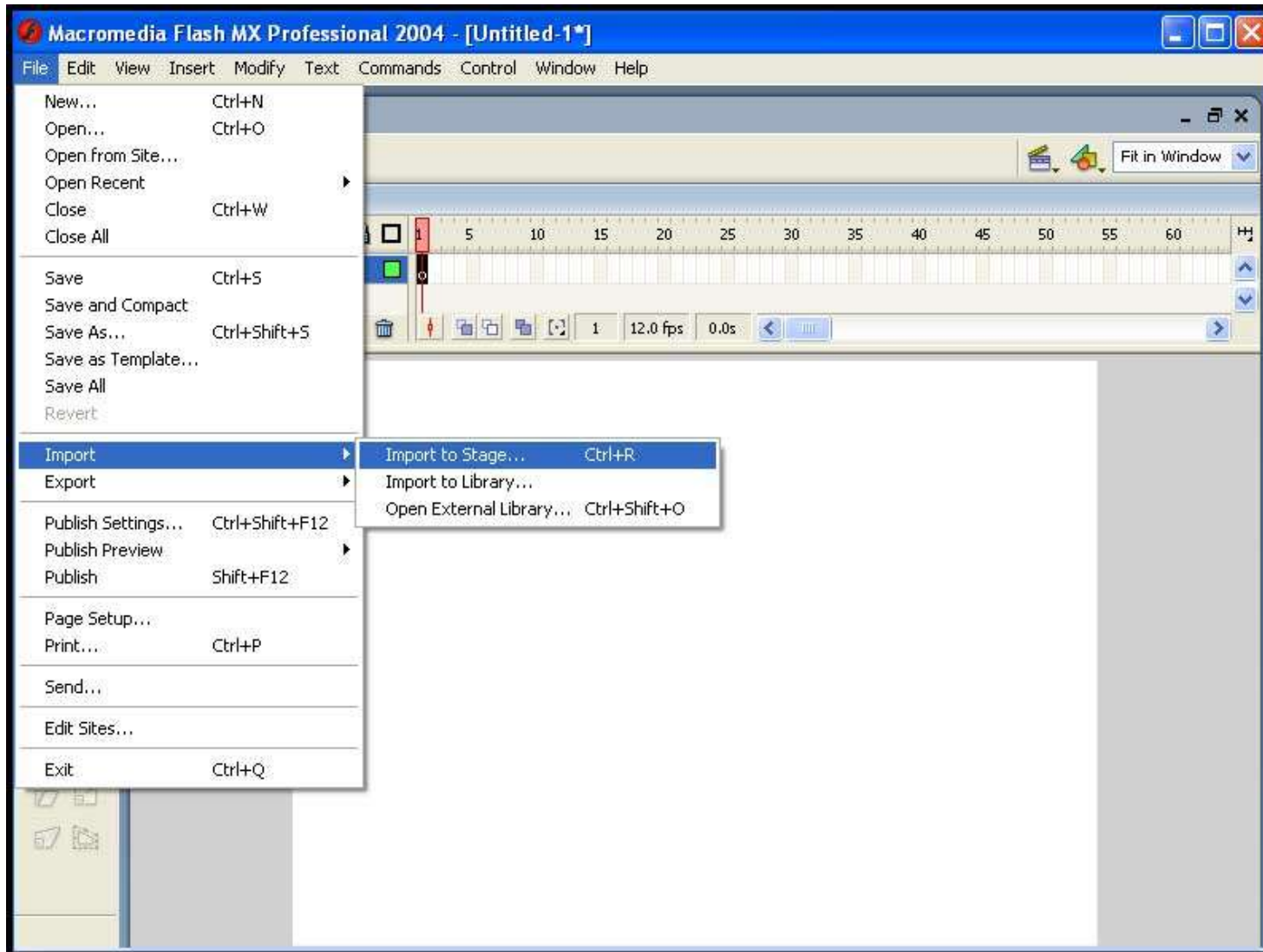
Now we are in Flash, my preferred animation program. I prefer Flash because I know it. One of these days I'm going to spend some time with the free and open source equivalent called Scalable Vector Graphic (SVG)… one of these days, unless of course Flash becomes free! And open source…

Anyway! I've clicked the first key frame in the time line, then clicked file>import>import to stage (Ctrl R). A window will appear asking me to select the file I am wanting to import. I want to import the picture of Colin…

Screencasting – Talking pictures
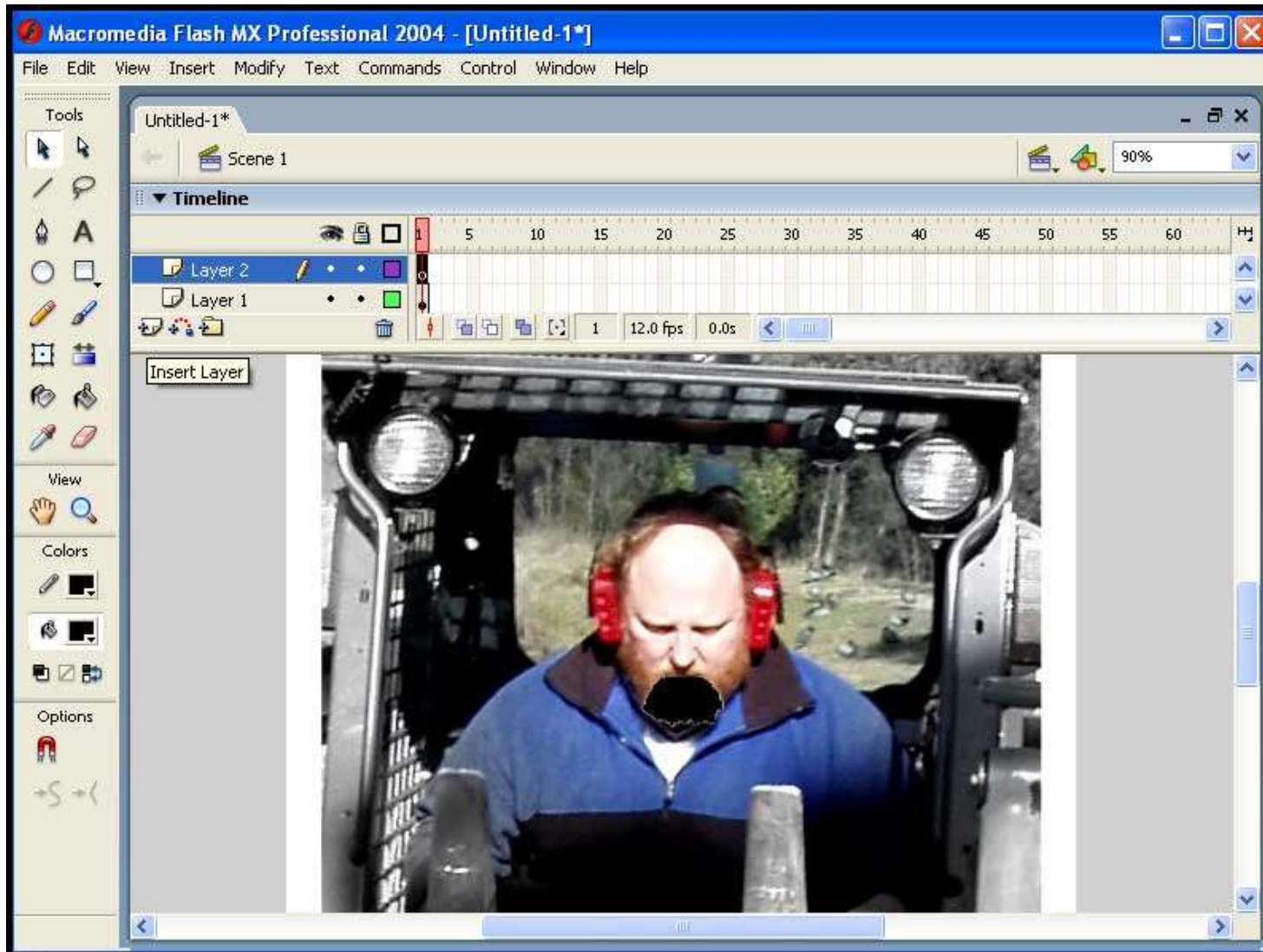
There's our man!

Now I've created a new layer in the time line by clicking the little"new page" icon with the blue plus symbol on it, just below the time line layers.

Clicking the first frame of that new layer (it turns black when selected), I'll now repeat the import to stage steps only this time I'll import the transparent jaw.

As you can probably tell, the jaw will be on the top layer and so will sit over the image of Colin. Once in, all I need to do is position in over the black spaces.

Screencasting – Talking pictures
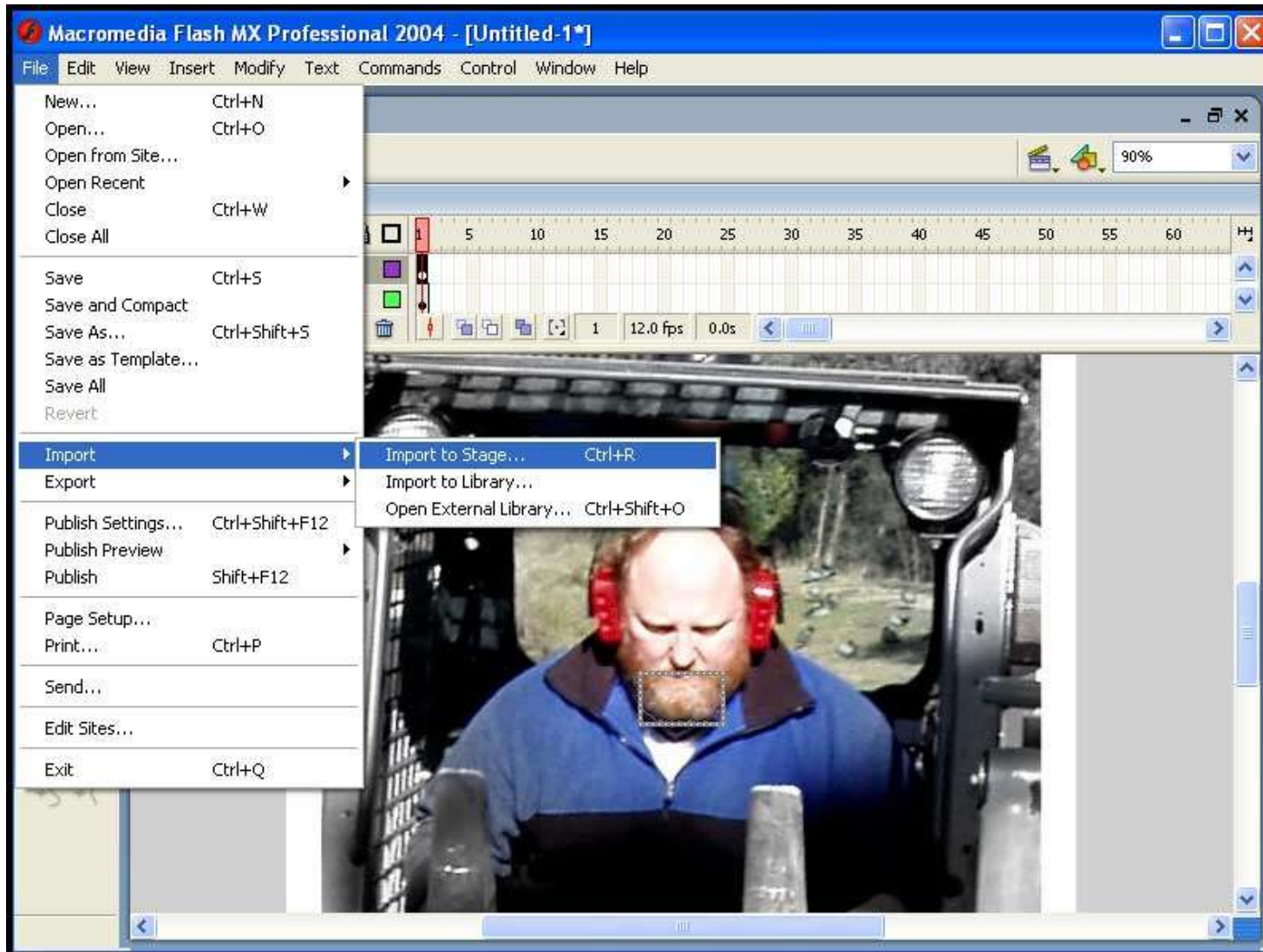
Just to refresh your memory, here's the menu for importing to the stage again. See how the jaw has been positioned over the black space? I did this with the arrow keys, after making sure the arrow tool was selected from the tool bar (which happens to be under the file menu at the moment).

Screencasting – Talking pictures
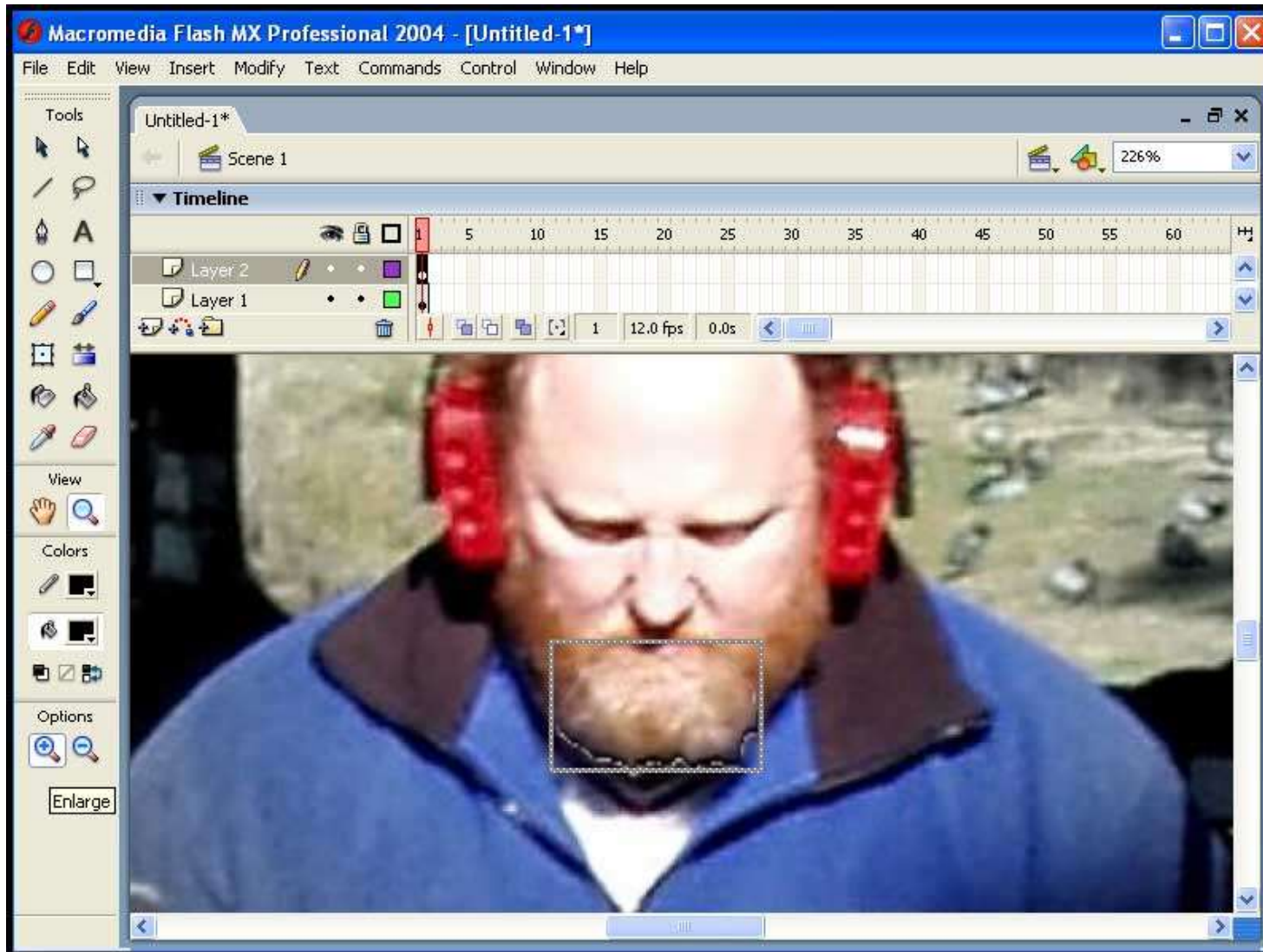
Zooming in on the jaw placement, I can see that I was close, but not close enough in positioning it over the black. I'll just continue to use the arrow keys.

Notice in this screen grab I have the zoom tool selected? Its the one next to the hand icon. Below it, past the colour selectors are the options for this tool – zoom or zoom out.

Screencasting – Talking pictures
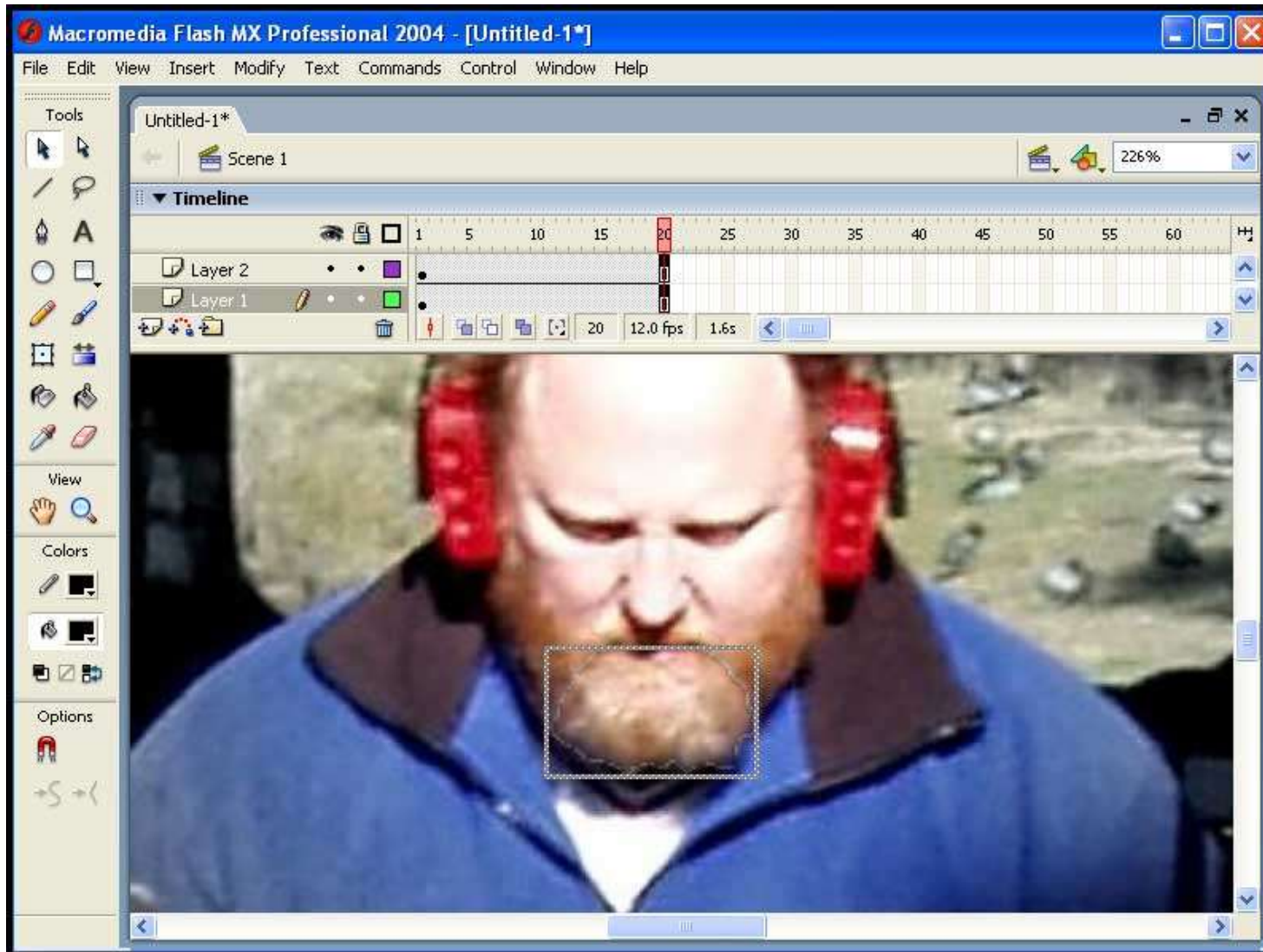
Now that the jaw is in the right place, hiding the black, I need to create frames for the length of the animation. I happen to know that the default frame rate for Flash is 12 frames per second, so if I enter frames in for 20 or so, I'll end up with a 2 second film. Enough to demonstrate at least…

So I have selected the 20th frame on each frame layer and pressed F5. F5 is short for "insert frames" which can be manually found under the "Insert" menu.

This has now created 20 frames for both Colin and his jaw to play over.

Now I need to create key frames on the jaw's time line so I can move the jaw as though talking…

Screencasting – Talking pictures
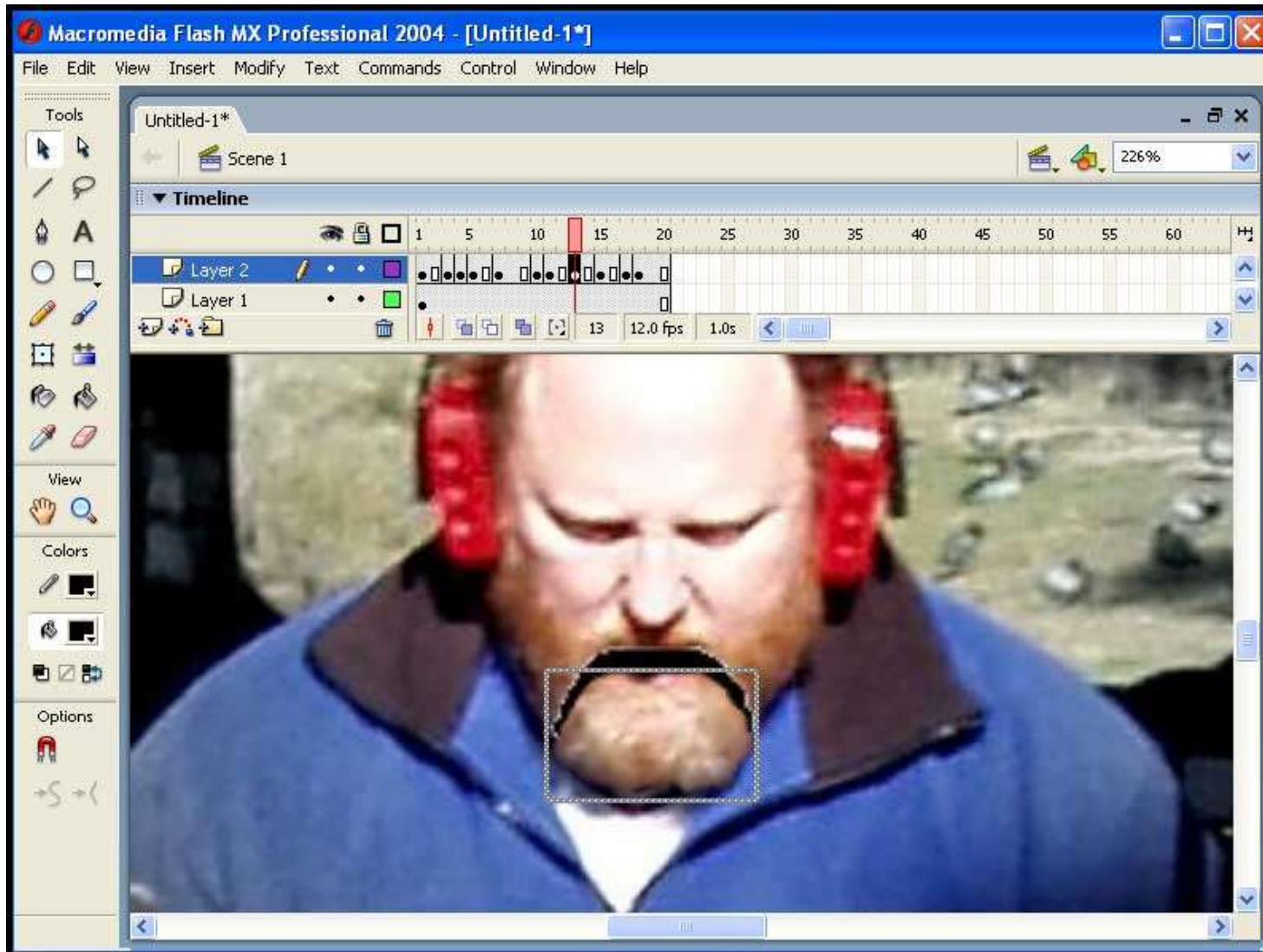
So looking carefully at the jaw's time line (layer 2) you should be able to see black dots in a number of the frames. Those black dots are key frames I have created. On each key frame I simply move the jaw down and up a little. When the movie plays, as it passes those key frames the jaw will move up and down, thus creating the effect of a talking Colin.

To create a key frame, just click every second frame or so on the Jaw's time line As you click a frame, key F6. F6 is short for "Insert key frame" which can be found manually under the "Insert" menu. Once a key frame is made you can freely move the jaw without affecting the position of it in the previous key frame Have a play, if you make a mistake, just right click the key frame that's causing trouble, and select "Clear key frame".

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Screencasting – Talking pictures
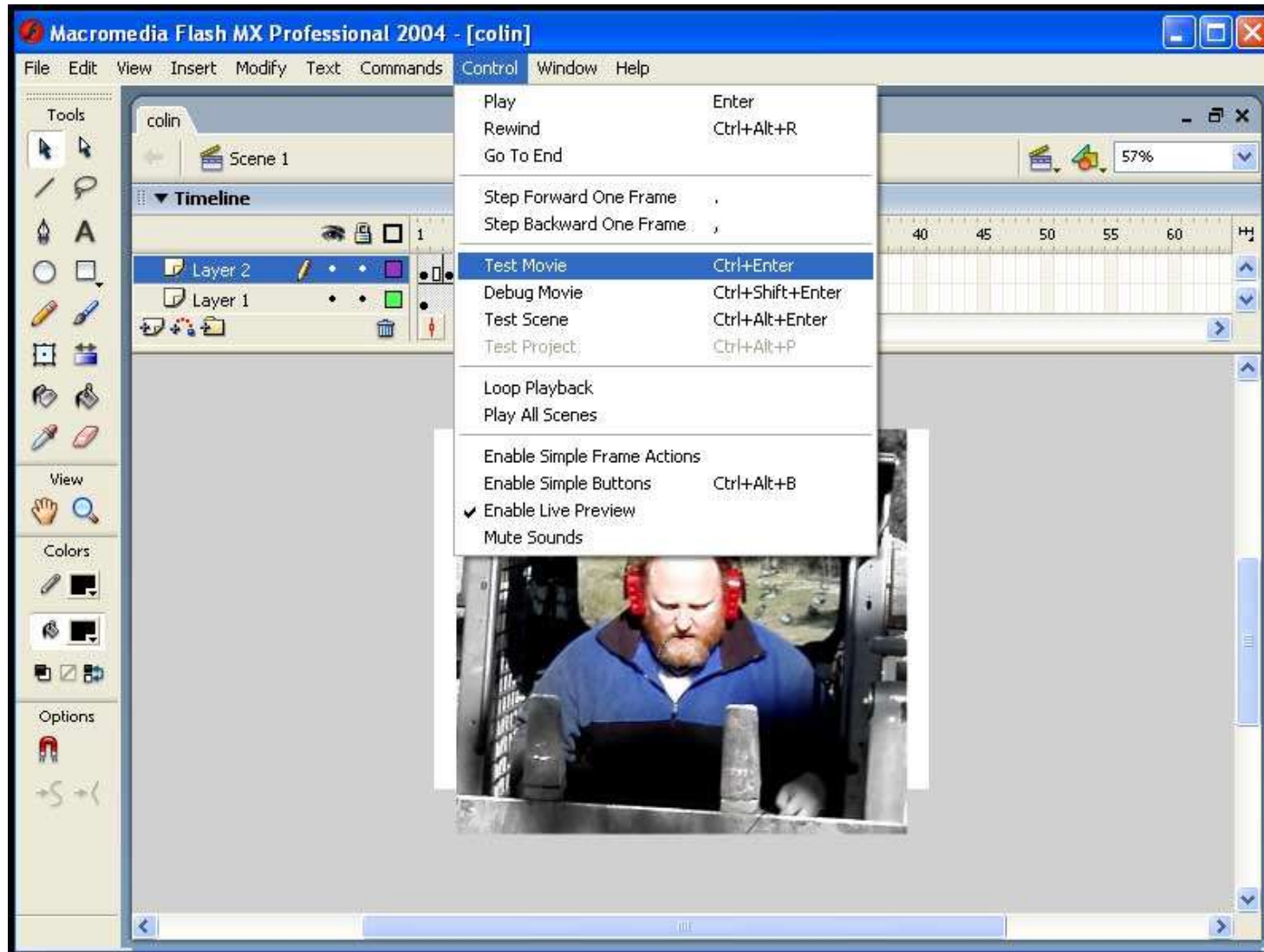
Once you're happy with the jaw movements across the key frames, save your work and preview the movie. Previewing it will generate a movie file next to your Flash editing file wherever you saved it. A Flash file ends in .fla and a movie file ends in .swf

Once you have saved your Flash editing file, just click the "control" menu, then "Test Movie" (Ctrl Enter). This will generate your movie file and show it to you in a new window within Flash.

Screencasting – Talking pictures
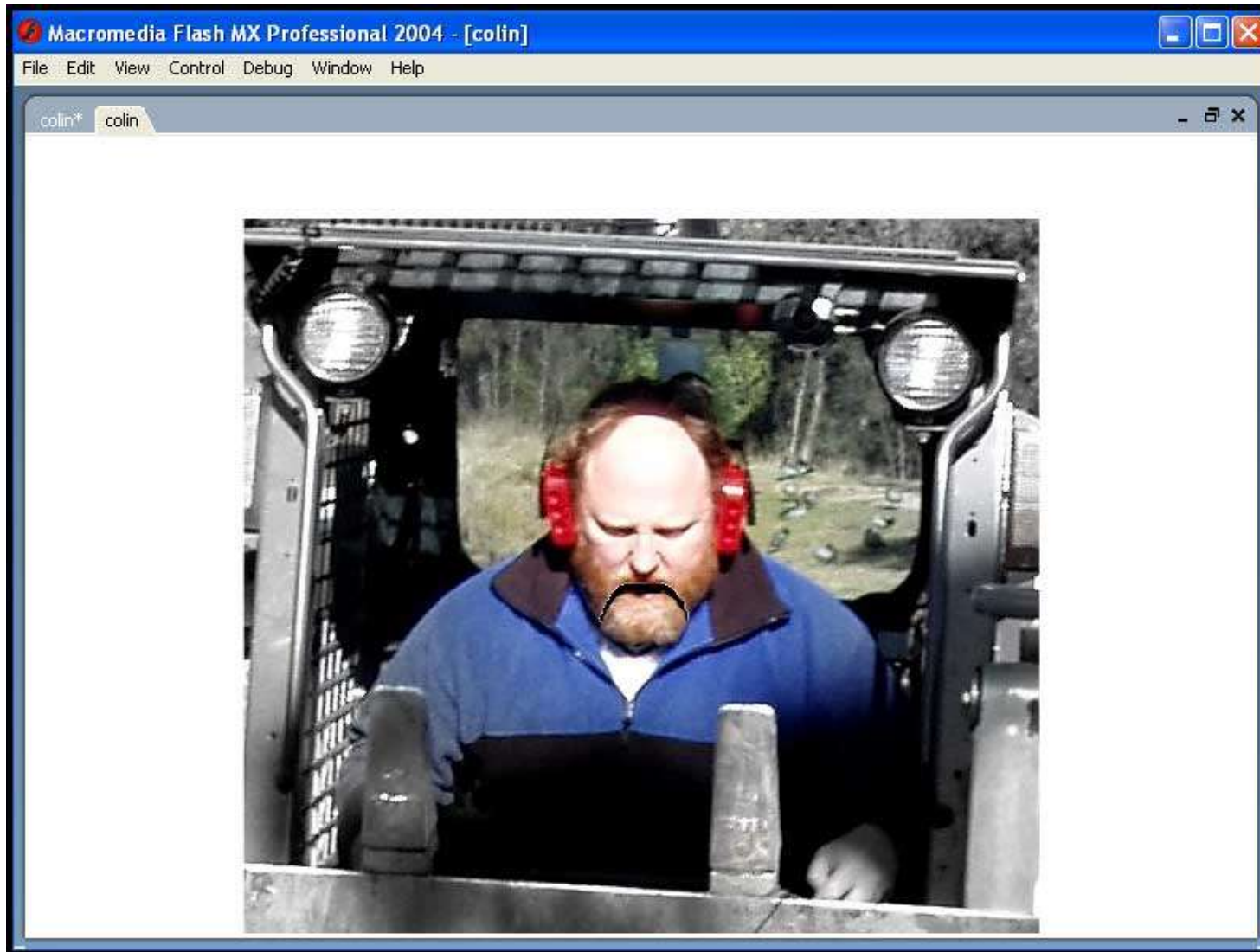
So you should be able to see the movement across the key frames you created. The movie will loop so even though my movie only goes for 20 frames, or just under 2 seconds, it will just keep looping like that until I close it.

The movie.swf is now ready to be loaded into a web page and/or played in a Flash enabled browser.